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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLIES

January 12, 1931

A radio talk by W. R. M. Wharton, chief of the eastern district, Federal Food and Drug Administration, delivered Monday mornings at 10 a.m., Eastern Time, through Station WJZ, New York, and associated National Broadcasting Company stations.

Good morning, my radio friends: Your representative of the Food and Drug Administration of the Federal government comes to you this morning for the thirty-seventh time, to tell you personal experiences illustrating how the enforcement of the food and drugs act protects your food and drug supply and to tell you how to read labels, in order that you may protect yourselves and become discriminating, exacting, and economical buyers.

My story today is about adulterated chocolate. It is not very often that a large and supposedly reputable concern will stoop to such practices as I shall tell you about today, but occasionally such a firm will cheat for the sake of additional profit - will attempt to impose upon its customers an adulterated product in the guise of a pure and unadulterated one.

On January 24, 1919, a large manufacturer of chocolate products appeared in a Federal court and entered a plea of guilty to a charge of adulterating chocolate with cacao shells and fats foreign to chocolate. The Federal judge imposed a fine on the concern.

Let me explain that chocolate is made from cacao beans. The beans contain a large percentage of natural fat which, when separated, is known as cacao butter. Cacao butter is an expensive product and has a ready sale as such. An entirely different product is made by extracting the fat of coconuts. This is known as coconut fat. If a manufacturer of chocolate products should extract the fat from cocoa beans and sell this as such, and substitute in the chocolate a fat derived from coconuts, large additional profits would result. And you, the consumer, would get an inferior, adulterated chocolate when you thought you bought pure chocolate. Moreover, additional profit to the manufacturer would result if quantities of the worthless cocoa shells were included in the chocolate. Well, this is exactly what this large chocolate manufacturer did in 1919: This corporation substituted coconut fat and added cocoa shells to the chocolate which it sold; and the concern, when charged with violating the food and drugs act, entered a plea of guilty and was fined.

Now, your food and drug inspectors, remembering the old adage, "Once a thief, always a thief," continuously kept a check on the concern in question, expecting a return to the old practices. The company apparently learned only a temporary lesson from the conviction which resulted in the first instance; anyhow, about 10 years were to go by before

the old trick was resumed. When the thing happened that your government officials expected might happen, they were ready to protect you, my friends, from the imposition of being sold adulterated chocolate.

In 1928 the price of cocoa butter rose until it was worth forty-two cents a pound. At this time a certain kind of cocoanut fat was worth about 18 cents per pound. Here was the incentive for a return to substitution; here was the incentive to violate the food and drugs act and to impose adulterated chocolate upon you. Well, the large chocolate manufacturer again succumbed to the temptation--it began to buy large quantities of cocoanut fat, and when these purchases began, your inspectors knew it at once. How did they know? Well--it is their business to know. Your government officers now stepped in, tested finished products going out into commerce, and found cocoanut oil present in products labeled and sold as pure chocolate. The remedy was applied: the adulterated products were seized. Then the president of the company appeared. He offered several fishy explanations, but finally admitted that a large quantity of adulterated products was on hand in the factory and offered to label it "Compound Chocolate with added Cocoanut Oil." He said, "We will pack the material in bags, after it is properly labeled, and send it to an auction room for disposal, as we are desirous of getting this material out of our plant." Sequel: again, on June 10, 1929, Mr. Large Manufacturer faced a Federal judge. What did the corporation say this time? Again it said, "We are guilty." It received a large fine and the odium and publicity of conviction of criminal violation of a Federal statute.

It is, my friends, by actions such as these that your foods and drugs are safeguarded by enforcement of the Federal food and drugs act.

My read-the-label subject today is "Chocolate Products." Cocoa beans from which chocolate is made are imported in huge quantities from East Africa, the West Indies, and from South America. Chocolate is a very concentrated food, and it is mildly stimulating.

You should read labels on chocolate and chocolate products, including chocolate candy, for if the chocolate is in any way different from what the general understanding is that such a product should be, then the label must declare the manner of its difference from the genuine article. And besides, various chocolate terms have different meanings: those I propose to tell you:

Chocolate, otherwise known as Plain Chocolate, or Bitter Chocolate, or Chocolate Liquor, or Chocolate Paste, or Bitter Chocolate Coating. It is a solid or plastic mass obtained by grinding cacao nibs and contains not less than 50% of cacao fat; and, on the moisture and fat-free basis, not more than 8% of total ash, not more than 4/10th per cent of ash insoluble in hydrochloric acid, and not more than 7% of crude fibre.

Sweet Chocolate, or Sweet Chocolate Coating, is chocolate mixed with sugar (sucrose), with or without the addition of cacao butter, spices, or other flavoring materials, and contains on the moisture-, sugar- and fat-free basis, no greater per cent of total ash, ash insoluble in hydrochloric acid, or crude fibre, respectively, than is found in moisture and fat-free chocolate.

Milk Chocolate, or Sweet Milk Chocolate, is the product obtained by grinding chocolate with sugar, with the solids of whole milk or the constituents of milk solids, in proportions normal for whole milk, with or without cacao butter or flavoring material. It contains not less than 12% of milk solids.

Cocoa, or Powdered Cocoa, is chocolate deprived of a portion of its fat and pulverized, and contains, on the moisture and fat-free basis, no greater percentage of total ash, ash insoluble in hydrochloric acid, or crude fibre, respectively, than is found in moisture and fat-free chocolate.

"Breakfast Cocoa" is cocoa which contains not less than 22 per cent of cacao fat.

Sweet Cocoa, Sweetened Cocoa, is cocoa mixed with sugar (sucrose), and contains not more than 65 per cent of sugar in the finished product and, on the moisture-, sugar-, and fat-free basis, no greater percentage of total ash, ash insoluble in hydrochloric acid, or crude fibre, respectively, than is found in moisture and fat-free chocolate.

Sweet Milk Cocoa is the product obtained by grinding cocoa with sugar, with the solids of whole milk, or the constituents of milk solids in proportions normal for whole milk, and with or without flavoring material. It contains not less than 12 per cent of milk solids.

Dutch-Process Chocolate, "Alkalized Chocolate" and Dutch-Process Cocoa, "Alkalized Cocoa", are modifications, respectively, of chocolate and cocoa, in that in their manufacture an alkali carbonate, or other suitable alkaline substance, has been employed. In the preparation of these products, not more than three parts by weight of potassium carbonate, or the neutralizing equivalent thereof in other alkaline substance, are added to each 100 parts by weight of cacao nibs. The finished products conform to the standards for chocolate and cocoa, respectively, due allowances being made for the kind and amount of alkaline substance added.

Now, knowing these definitions and standards, my friends, you may read labels understandingly.

Chocolate sold for candy-making varies greatly in quality, depending upon the kind and condition of the cacao beans used in its manufacture. Such chocolate varies in wholesale price from eleven cents per pound to thirty-two cents per pound. The candy makers know of this difference in

quality, but there is no way that you may know by the label, since there is no requirement that the relative quality of products be stated on labels. The matter of quality of chocolate products is one that you will have to learn from your own experiences.

Now, the difference between chocolate and cocoa is only that in the case of cocoa a large part of the natural fat or cocoa butter has been taken away. On the other hand, if you buy a package labeled, "Breakfast Cocoa," the product will contain at least 22% of natural cacao fat, which is nearly half of that found in chocolate. If you observe a package of cocoa labeled "Dutch-Process," you will know that the manufacturer has added a harmless alkali carbonate intended to give certain qualities to the cocoa which are preferred by some users.

Many products are flavored with chocolate and with cocoa. Among these are dessert preparations. The chief point for label readers to have in mind in this connection is that when the label declares the product to be chocolate, for example, "Chocolate Pudding Powder," the flavor must be derived from chocolate; whereas, if the label declares the product to be "chocolate-flavored," then the flavor may be derived from cocoa.

Again, the order and arrangement of the words naming the product are important for the label reader to take into consideration: for example, "Chocolate Malted Milk" is a different product from "Malted Milk Chocolate." And again, "Malt, Milk and Chocolate" is still a different product. "Chocolate Malted Milk" is a chocolate-flavored malted milk and must contain 7-1/2% of butter fat derived from the milk. "Malted Milk Chocolate" is a mixture of malted milk and chocolate, and so falls under the requirements of milk chocolate and must contain 12% milk solids. "Malt, Milk and Chocolate" is a product, the milk of which is not malted, but malt and ground chocolate are added to dry milk. This product must contain 12% milk solids derived from milk.

Chocolate milk and milk chocolate products are sometimes made from skim milk. Whenever this is true, the labels will tell you so.

Sometimes products such as starch or arrowroot flour are added to chocolate products. When this is done, the labels will inform you of the fact.

Now, my friends, I want you to learn to read labels. It is greatly to your advantage to do so. Read labels on retail packages. Read labels on display containers in grocery stores. The chocolate-coated cakes you buy from display containers in your grocery store may be coated with other than pure chocolate. Read the label on such containers and be sure that you are getting what you want to buy. Learn to read labels and you will become discriminating and careful buyers. Choose, rather than

accept--do not yield to the importunities of those who have something different or some substitute to sell you. You may learn to read labels by studying my read-the-label talks, and you may have a complete set of these for the asking. Write to - W. R. M. Wharton, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 201 Varick Street, New York City.

I will be with you again next week at this hour.

